
Modern Science **Jonah and the** **Whale**



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MODERN SCIENCE, JONAH AND THE WHALE

Among the many criticisms offered against the doctrine of the scientific accuracy of the Bible, the one most frequently advanced is the objection to the story of Jonah and the Whale. The account has been called "the greatest fish story of history," and many men who have never studied the narrative claim it is the most outstanding weakness of the entire Bible. Infidelity has long laughed at this strange record but has never disproved the historicity of the affair.

The book of Jonah consists of four chapters with a total number of only forty-eight verses. It can be read in less than five minutes by the average reader. The entire book of Jonah would be accepted, even by the modern critic, if we would expurgate two verses. The first of these disputed passages is the last verse of the first chapter, and the other one is the last verse of the second chapter.

The first chapter of the book of Jonah recounts how God's wrath was kindled against Nineveh because of its outstanding sin. God sent a message to the prophet Jonah instructing him to proceed to Nineveh and testify concerning the coming destruction of the city with all of its inhabitants. Instead of going to Nineveh Jonah found a ship that was going to Tarshish, and fled from the direction of Nineveh as fast as he could travel. As Jonah was seeking to flee from God's appointed task, a mighty storm arose. When the men of the ship learned that this storm came upon them because of Jonah, at Jonah's behest, they cast him

overboard; to save their own lives, they jeopardized his.

This brings us to the disputed verse given in these simple words, "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

In the second chapter of Jonah, the first nine verses deal with the prayer that Jonah prayed from the depths of this sea monster. The tenth and final verse of the chapter, says, "And the Lord spake unto the fish and it vomited Jonah upon dry land."

I have quoted these verses from the authorized edition of the English Bible, as this edition is familiar to more people than any other.

This, then, is the story at which infidelity has laughed for many years. I repeat, however, this account infidelity has never disproved.

THE PROPHET JONAH IS AN INTERESTING CHARACTER

The school of higher criticism, unable to swallow the tale of the fish, has said that Jonah was a legendary hero of Jewish folklore and fable. The contrary, however, is true. Jonah was a real character. This may readily be attested by an appeal to a book of pure history. The books of the Kings among the Hebrew people were historical records. In II Kings 14:25, there is a historical reference to the prophet Jonah that authenticates his character and gives him an established background. In this one verse of Scripture, the father of Jonah is named, thus giving his genealogy. The place of his residence is told, the king who ruled

when Jonah was alive is mentioned by name, and history here attests that some of his prophecies were fulfilled in the reign of that king. So from this historical reference we see that Jonah was a real character.

There is an even more reliable evidence of the historicity of Jonah than this book of Jewish history. I refer to the conclusive testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed in the house of His friends by one of His followers. To-day He has many so-called friends who by their infidelity and unbelief re-enact the drama of Judas, but believing friend and disbelieving enemy alike are united in their praise of the character of this Man. Not even his enemies impugn His veracity, so with a great deal of assurance, I turn to His testimony concerning the historicity of the man Jonah. In the twelfth chapter of Matthew, verses 38-41, I find that Jesus Christ made two references to Jonah as a historical character. He gives the experience of Jonah as a type of His own burial and resurrection, stating that the only sign His generation would receive was the sign of the prophet Jonah. I quote His words: "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so must the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the depths of the earth."

The second reference to the historicity of Jonah in the teaching and preaching of Christ was the mention of the repentance of Nineveh. Again I quote His words: "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it because they repented in the presence of Jonah, but behold, a greater than Jonah is here."

So we have authority for saying that Jonah as a character is as truly historical as the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is interesting to read the writings of this man Jonah, for much of his character may be seen in this brief section of his autobiography. He is one of the most honest writers in literature, for he writes his own faults. He tells of his own stubbornness as he sets his judgment against the commands of God, and with a rare independence, he makes no alibi, gives no explanation, simply says that this is what he did, and gives us an account of what followed.

THE EXPERIENCE OF JONAH

was truly remarkable. He seems to have been the first foreign missionary. He was called of God to bring a warning of the consequence of sin and an offer of redemption and mercy to a foreign people. This service he refused, but later, repenting of his refusal, he returned and preached to this nation with such tremendous effect that every soul was converted, from the king on down to the humblest subject. In this account of Jonah's refusal to serve and in his flight to Tarshish, the higher critic has sought to show that Jonah in his ignorance believed in a tribal God of limited power. This is one of the strong arguments of the modernist in claiming that the idea of God in the Scripture is an evolution. They falsely state: "Beginning with the God of restricted authority, a tribal deity, whose circle of influence was circumscribed, we gradually evolved the idea of God who was universally omnipotent." Jonah and his attempt to flee to Tarshish is star witness in this case.

The most cursory examination, however, will show

that such is not true. The unbeliever, be he infidel or atheist, can find no comfort for his weird idea in Jonah's belief in God. The evidence shows that Jonah knew the universal omnipotence of God, the Creator. While the storm was raging at its height, Jonah slept in peaceful security in the bowels of the ship. When the captain awakened him and said, "Who art thou?" Jonah replied, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the GOD OF HEAVEN WHICH HATH MADE THE SEA AND THE DRY LAND." Jonah's idea of God was not restricted to the Hebrew tribal deity. He recognized in God the universal omnipotent Creator.

The question arises then, "Why did Jonah flee toward Tarshish if he was not striving to get out of the reach of God? Why did he take this ship that would bear him away from Nineveh?"

Let us remember that Jonah, like all the prophets of Israel, was intensely patriotic. He loved his own nation and people, and the most bitterly hated enemy possessed by Israel at this period was Nineveh. When the Word of God came to Jonah saying that He would destroy Nineveh except they repent, Jonah, in the fervor of his patriotic heart, said, "That suits me. If God will wipe out Nineveh, that will constitute a patriotic victory for Israel, and I will get as far away from Nineveh as I can." In other words, Jonah was an ordinary human with the passions of the modern man. This same instinct of patriotism was manifested in some of the most cultivated Christian men of the twentieth century when the United States of America entered the World War. Men who had radiated love, and had talked about the international brotherhood of man began to curse the Germans, damn the Kaiser,

because this race had become the nation's enemy! Jonah thought and reasoned and acted exactly as a modern would do in the same circumstances.

THE ELEMENT OF THE SUPERNATURAL

entered into the account of Jonah's experience before the introduction of the fish that swallowed him. God followed Jonah from the time of the prophet's defection until he returned in submission and humility. First of all, He followed Jonah with a storm, for Jonah testified that the storm came upon the ship because of him. So little did Jonah fear the effects of that storm, reposing as he did in the confidence of the keeping care of God, that God followed Jonah again in the call of the captain of the vessel. The prophet was further pursued by the intention of God when as the men cast their lots, the lot fell upon Jonah. When he was cast over the side of the ship, the supernatural element of the story continues with the very simple statement that God had prepared a great fish to be the temporary host of Jonah. Then this brings us to the account of

THE FISH

I suppose it is only natural that every man will investigate any questioned case from the view point of his own preconceptioned prejudice. It might be that I was not able to make a fair examination of the story of Jonah because I came to the study of the account with a strong belief that the account was true. That was because I had previously read the testimony of Jesus Christ, whose Word I unhesitatingly accept upon any question of which He speaks. Even without the testimony of Jesus, I would be inclined to believe the story

of Jonah was true because the infidel and the atheist are united in denying it. I confess to a mental revulsion against such company, and almost automatically accept what they reject. I have noticed in these years of scientific study that atheism and infidelity never investigate or conduct research except under the prejudice of unbelief. Whenever an atheist starts out to investigate or study a matter with an absolutely closed mind, the whole attempt revolves itself into an effort to disprove the subject he is investigating. The infidel is almost as bad.

There is, however, no counter explanation to this account of the strange experience of Jonah that will satisfy the inquiring mind if we rule out the supernatural. One critic says that Jonah had a bad nightmare and that when he awakened, he wrote his dream. Another critic says that the entire book of Jonah is a simple fabrication, that none of the incidents are historical. On weird near-thinker states that when Jonah was cast overboard from the ship, he was picked up by a vessel following. The second ship had as a figurehead the image of a fish. When the men in the first ship saw the rescue of Jonah by this ship, they said that he had been swallowed by a monster of the deep. But the Bible simply and literally states that a sea monster that God had prepared swallowed Jonah.

I call your attention now to the phrase "that God prepared." The whole argument must turn upon those words. The question is raised, "Is God able to prepare a fish that would accommodate a man and keep him alive for as long as seventy-two hours?" If God cannot do this, then He is indeed tremendously inferior to man. Recently a company of finite men, who had some

small engineering skill, built an iron fish. Twenty men entered this iron fish and remained under water for twelve days and twelve nights. At the end of that time they came to the surface again to replenish their supplies of food and oxygen. This iron fish sent them forth on the dry land for a period of relaxation. Again twenty men entered this iron fish and descended into the deep. Of course, they called this man-made fish a submarine, and nobody doubted the ability of men of mechanical and mental ingenuity to construct such a fish. They are common today.

How weird it seems to us who think things through that men see the evidence of man's power to work these so-called miracles, and will yet deny the same degree of power to God!

Again we see that God prepared other things besides the fish. In the story of Jonah there was a vine that was prepared: there was a worm that was specifically sent. There was a strong East wind that blew at an untimely season. The God who made the heavens and the earth prepared a fish, a worm, and a vine.

Some few days ago I was talking with a keen, intelligent thinker, who is not related in any sense to the household of faith. This man said, "You do not have to prove that the story of Jonah is true. If you can prove that it is reasonable and scientifically possible, that is all I ask. You demonstrate to me that this thing could have happened and I will accept the story as true." Now this is clear thinking, and it shall be the purpose of this article to demonstrate on the findings of modern research science that the story of Jonah is reasonable and that this historical occurrence could have happened just this way.

THE ONLY OBJECTION OF THE INFIDEL

I have ever read is that there is no whale that has a throat large enough to swallow a man.

I am at a loss to understand how the whale crept into this story. The Scripture in the original languages nowhere says that Jonah's host was a whale. In the book of Jonah in the Hebrew language, the word there translated "fish" is the Hebrew word "dag." This word appears in the Old Testament nineteen times, and is translated on each occasion "fish." We know of course that the whale is not a fish, so if the Scripture in the Hebrew text says that a fish swallowed Jonah, the whale is ruled out at once. The whale is a mammal. It follows the order of viviparous birth. It suckles its young and is a warm-blooded animal. It would be scientifically incorrect to speak of the whale as a fish. In the King James' version of the New Testament there is an incorrect translation that makes this fish appear as a whale. Jesus did not say that Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly. The translators, in dealing with this passage in the original Greek, used the word whale because it ~~was~~ the only sea creature they knew that was big enough to suit them. The word, however, is "ketos"—and literally means a monster of the deep. The Hebrew word for whale is "tannin." The Old Testament Scripture says that Jonah was swallowed by a great "dag." The New Testament says that he was picked up by a "ketos," and nowhere does the original writing say that this was a whale.

The Old and New Testament both agree that a fish or a monster of the deep received Jonah into its capacious maw where he resided for three days and three nights. But let us suppose that the creature of the

deep was in very fact a whale. It would still be reasonable and scientifically demonstrable that a whale could have swallowed Jonah.

THE WHALES CONSTITUTE THE GENUS CETACEA

This genus is divided into two general groups, the first of which is composed of all whales that are known as Denticete. These are the whales, as their name suggests, that are armed with teeth. Most of this variety do not have teeth on both jaws, but they have several strong, well-defined teeth in their lower jaw which fit into sockets in the upper jaw. They use these teeth for tearing loose their food and crushing squids and preparing them for the first steps of digestion. The sperm whale, for instance, which is a monster that often reaches a length of sixty and sixty-five feet, has forty-four teeth in the lower jaw but sockets only in the upper. He has an extremely small throat. He chews his food and crushes it. It is evident at once that this whale could not have swallowed Jonah because of his custom of chewing, and the restricted area of the esophagus. Presumably this type of whale, which has been the chief object of commercial pursuit, gave rise to the current belief that NO whale could swallow Jonah.

There is another whale of this same type, the Denticete, known as the "bottle-nosed" or "beaked" whale. Its scientific name is Tiphidae. This is a small whale not over thirty feet long. Although this whale is only half the size of the sperm whale, it has a throat big enough to swallow a man. However, we exclude this whale from being Jonah's host because it also is armed with teeth and chews its food.

I do not desire to make this study technical, and so I will pass on to say that the other type of whale is known as the Mysticete. This group is composed of the whales that have no teeth. In place of teeth they are equipped with whale bone plates, called balaena. These plates form the sieve through which the food of the whale is strained. These plates vary from eighteen inches in length to twelve feet in some cases. One particular whale of the order Mysticete has plates that are eighteen inches in width at the juncture with the jaw. They taper down to about the width of the hand and become finally attenuated, something after the order of the straws in a whisk-broom. The ends of the upper and lower balaena join in the center of the mouth, forming a sieve through which the food is strained, as stated above.

This whale has a curious habit of feeding. He opens his mouth, submerges his lower jaw, and rushes through the water at a terrific speed. When he has filled his gigantic mouth, he closes his jaw and curls back his lips. By a muscular pressure of the tongue he forces the water out of his mouth, straining it through his balaena, or plates. When the water is all excluded, the whale swallows whatever is left in his mouth. Some of these creatures are armed with these plates to the number of three hundred on each side. The balaena is the source of the whale bone of trade. These whales migrate from sea to sea, and since all seas connect somewhere, they may be found in their migrations and wanderings in strange, out of the way places.

It is in this order of whale that the very largest types are found. They form a fascinating field of study.

For instance, there is that variety called the Megaptera Medosa, or "humpbacked" whales. They are weird looking as they pass in the sea, being about fifty feet in length, with their head forming fully one-third of their entire length. They have a low, thick dorsal fin which adds to their humpbacked appearance. The pectoral fins are fifteen feet long, and as they speed through the water, these pectorals assume the appearance of wings. They are covered with rows of longitudinal ridges like a rib tread automobile tire. They feed on anything that floats on the surface of the sea.

The largest whale known is the Balaenoptera Musculus, commonly called the "sulphur bottom," belonging to the variety called fin-back. One of them has been measured that was eighty-eight feet and six inches in length, while the average length would be in the neighborhood of seventy-six feet. They also are armed with longitudinal ridges. From sixty to ninety protuberant ridges of blubber line them for their entire length. This particular type of whale would have no difficulty whatever in accommodating a man. As an evidence of the size these great animals reach, I quote here an expert, Charles Bell Emerson, who replies to a query by saying:

"The last account that I have of a big haul was that of the Norwegian whaler, N. T. Nielson Alonso. She was covered from stem to stern with layers of congealed grease, and gave off that peculiar odor of whale oil that you can smell a mile or more; she arrived in Sydney, Australia, on February 29th, from the Ross Sea, she had to have bunker coal before proceeding to Larvik, Norway.

"Unusually favorable conditions prevailed all the time during the four months' cruise, and the vessels' tanks were full of whale oil to their full capacity.

"And it is recorded that fifty-seven thousand (57,000) barrels of oil were secured on that voyage. This is valued at about \$1,330,000.

"There is a record of a sulphur-bottom whale 95 feet in length and having a weight of 147 tons—294,000 pounds. This specimen, captured off the west coast of North America, is the largest whale of which there is authentic record; this would mean that this one was the largest animal ever known to man, up to date.

"The one that went ashore was big enough so that a 75-ton locomotive crane was unable to lift it out of the entrance to the Panama Canal, so it was towed 12 miles out to sea, and Navy aeroplanes dropped two 160-pound bombs and blew it to pieces."

The whale's stomach is complex, having from four to six chambers or compartments, in any one of which a small colony of men could be readily accommodated.

We have records that show the whale has proved itself host to various living creatures. The whale is an air breathing mammal and cannot live without oxygen. This oxygen it has to get somewhere above the water. It has in its head a wonderful air storage chamber. The air chamber is an enlargement or development of the nasal sinus, and in a very large whale, this air chamber would measure fourteen feet long by seven feet high, and seven feet wide.

Dr. Ransome Harvey recounts that a friend of his, weighing two hundred pounds, climbed from the mouth of a dead whale into this chamber. If the whale takes into its mouth any object too big to swallow, it thrusts it up into this air chamber. If he finds that he has a large object in his head, he swims to the nearest land, lies in shallow water, and ejects it.

Recently in the "Cleveland Plain Dealer" was an article quoting Dr. Ransome Harvey, who says that a dog was lost overboard from a whaler. It was found in the head of the whale six days later alive, and none the worse for its unnatural journey. This quotation from the "Cleveland Plain Dealer" was recently copied by the "Sunday School Times" and caused a great deal of comment.

At any rate it may easily be seen that a man would have no difficulty remaining alive for three days and three nights in an air chamber as extensive as this, containing 686 cubic feet of space.

But let us not forget our original proposition that it may not have been and probably was not a whale. There are sharks that swim the sea that would come under the restricted meaning of the Hebrew word "dag," for these sharks are fish.

The late Dr. A. C. Dixon stated that in a museum at Beirut, there is the head of a shark big enough to swallow the largest man that history records. Dr. Dixon also recounts instances where the white shark of the Mediterranean had swallowed a whole horse. This same monster of the deep swallowed a reindeer minus only its horns, and in another Mediter-

ranean white shark upon its capture investigators found a whole sea cow, about the size of an ox.

There is a ferocious and voracious shark called the *Somniosus Microcephalus*, also known as the "sleeping shark." While it is small, seldom getting more than twenty feet in length, it is the swiftest and most ferocious shark extant. It is known to attack the largest whale and to bite hunks of blubber from this huge mammal until the victim succumbs in death. This shark could have swallowed Jonah, but the difficulty is that it would probably have bitten him into at least two sections.

So we come to the point of this entire discussion. Is there any creature that swims the deep sea whose natural feeding habits and whose entire morphology would make him a logical host for Jonah? As far as I know, there is only one, but I am happy to state that there is one. This is a shark which is known as the *Rhinodon Typicus*. It is called variously the "bone-shark," the "Indo-Pacific shark," and the "whale-shark." I presume that the latter is its commonest name. Recently off the coast of Florida a specimen was captured and exhibited about the country and finally sent to the Smithsonian Institute. This was a comparatively small specimen, being thirty-six feet in length.

This shark gets its common name, the "whale-shark," from the fact that its oral cavity is similar to the structure found in the whale. Sometimes it reaches the length of fifty feet; and one account tells of the largest specimen captured, seventy feet in length. This shark, having no teeth, feeds like the whale, straining its food through great plates in its mouth. It has

■ capacious maw and could readily swallow a man. Indeed, we have collected many instances where this very thing has occurred. Out of these multiplied occasions we will consider just three. The first record comes to us from the Hawaiian Islands, in whose shark-infested waters the Rhinodon is a common visitor. During a recent visit to the Islands, we saw that a certain soldier from Schofield Barracks, on the Island of Oahu, was reported missing without leave. Thirty days after the man disappeared, a party of Japanese fishermen set out from Hilo to spread their nets, and were chagrined to find ■ Rhinodon basking on the surface in the vicinity where they desired to spread their nets.

The feeding habits of these great fish are interesting, but fatal to the nets of a fisherman. The shark will bask on the surface of the sea apparently asleep, until assailed by hunger. Then utterly without warning it will open its capacious maw, and with its eyes closed will charge at full speed through the water, engulfing whatever may be floating near the surface.

With a weight of many tons, and a velocity that makes that weight irresistible, woe to the flimsy nets that meet this charging monster! So fishermen never spread their nets when the Rhinodon is in the region. But the flesh of the shark is used for fertilizer on some of the plantations, and ■ cent a pound is the reward of the men who capture one.

So the fishermen put back to the port, and procured their harpoons and a high-powered rifle. Quietly approaching the basking creature, they succeeded in their purpose and captured it without much difficulty, and towed the body to the beach. There they cut it open to examine the contents of the stomach, and found

therein the skeleton of a six foot male human being. After thirty days in this weird sepulcher there was nought left but the bones of the frame, but every bone was articulated and undisturbed, thus evidencing the fact that the man had been swallowed whole. Indeed, as this shark has the balaena common to the whales, in place of the teeth usual to the sharks, it cannot bite or chew, and must swallow whatever it takes into its mouth in one entire piece.

The sad remains of what once had been a man were identified as the missing soldier, and the mystery of his case was thus cleared up to the satisfaction of the authorities. After thirty days there was no possible chance that a man in such condition could survive; this is merely recorded here to establish the fact that the *Rhinodon Typicus* does on occasion swallow human beings without harm to them in the process.

That such experiences may be more common than is generally believed, may be seen from the clipping taken from the current press. We reproduce the news item in its entirety, having taken pains to prove the accuracy of the report.

FISHERMEN FIND BODY OF MISSING MERCHANT INSIDE GIANT SHARK

Honolulu, T. H., Sept. 2.—(By United Press.)—Mystery surrounding the disappearance several days ago of Sadao Nakatus, Honolulu merchant, was cleared up Wednesday when fishermen found his body inside a huge shark which they caught off Barber's point.

Identification of the body was through dental work.

Nakatus and another merchant, Minoru Kanagawa, set out last Sunday in a skiff on a fishing expedition.

When they failed to return, the destroyer Gamble and the minesweeper Tanager VI began a search for them. Airplanes also joined in the search. The merchants' overturned skiff was found thirty miles off the point, but no trace of either man was found.

Three fishermen caught two sharks in the vicinity of the point Wednesday, brought them ashore, cut them open and inside of one they found the body of Nakatus.

Two naval aviators who joined the search risked their lives in the shark-infested waters when a plane made a forced landing sixty miles from Honolulu.

The plane, piloted by Lieut. W. L. Rees, rode the seas until the destroyer arrived to take it in tow.

The tragic conclusion of this episode is explained by the phrase "several days ago." The question that must be settled in the light of this present inquiry is "What would become of a man who was in this dangerous predicament for just three days and nights?" Once more we have a recent event that will shed some light on this problem.

In the Literary Digest we noticed an account of an English sailor who was swallowed by a gigantic Rhinodon in the English Channel. Briefly, the account stated that in the attempt to harpoon one of these monstrous sharks this sailor fell overboard, and before he could be picked up again the shark, feeding, turned and engulfed him. His horrified friends made so much outcry that they frightened the fish, and it sounded and disappeared.

The entire trawler fleet put out to hunt the fish down, and forty-eight hours after the accident occurred

the fish was sighted and slain with a one-pound deck-gun. The winches on the trawlers were too light to haul up the body of the mighty denizen of the deep, so they towed the carcass to the shore and opened it, to give the body of their friend Christian burial. But when the shark was opened, they were amazed to find the man unconscious but alive! He was rushed to the hospital, where he was found to be suffering from shock alone, and a few hours later was discharged ■ being physically fit. The account concluded by saying that the man was on exhibit in a London Museum at a shilling admittance fee; being advertised as "THE JONAH OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY."

We corresponded with our representatives in London, and shortly afterward received corroboration of this incident, and last year had the privilege of meeting this man in person. His physical appearance was odd, in that his entire body was devoid of hair, and odd patches of a yellowish-brown color covered his entire skin.

FOR TWO DAYS AND NIGHTS HE LIVED IN A MONSTER OF THE DEEP. And this without any special Providential care expressly stated, or even implied. Does it not seem reasonable to concede that if a man in the ordinary course of nature, can exist for two days and nights inside a marine monster, a prophet of God under His direct care and protection could stand the experience a day and a night longer?

The summary of the matter is this: There are creatures which swim the seas which could in the very course of their nature be hosts to a man like Jonah.

The heart of the matter, however, is this statement from the Book that God had prepared a fish. It is impossible to state whether God prepared this fish in the natural order of generation and birth or whether this was a special creature.

So the purpose of this article is to show that the account is reasonable. It could have happened. As the intelligent thinker suggested, if it could have happened, and the Scripture says it did happen, upon the authority of Jesus Christ and the weight of attested reason, let us testify to the truth of this account.



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